

5. That only two descriptions of cabinets are to be admitted into the Museum, namely, glass cases of one uniform pattern for the reception of birds, small quadrupeds and the like, which are to be placed along the walls; and, tables with glass covers of an uniform pattern for the reception of shells, insects, fossils requiring cabinets, geological specimens, and minerals; to be placed along the centre of the apartments.
6. That all objects in the Museum be numbered and entered in Museum books to be provided for the purpose, and that duplicates of birds, shells, insects, and the like, be from time to time transmitted on the part of the Society, with figured lists, names of original donors, &c. to such eminent scientific individuals as may seem most likely to afford correct information regarding them, and who should be requested to return the lists with the names and references inserted opposite each figure or number.
7. That all such communications are to be regularly entered in Museum books, together with such replies as may be received on the subject.

June 4th, 1839.

ART. X.—*Observations on the "Report on the Museum of the Asiatic Society, by DR. WM. JAMESON," published in the Journal for March, 1839. By J. T. PEARSON, Assistant Surgeon, formerly Curator of the Museum of the Asiatic Society.*

To the Secretaries to the Asiatic Society.

GENTLEMEN—A paper by Dr. Wm. Jameson, entitled a "Report on the Museum of the Asiatic Society" having appeared in your Journal for March last, reached me to day; and as it appears to contain reflections upon my conduct while Curator of the Society's Museum; and recommendations, which if I had not made I should have neglected, or been ignorant, of my duty; I request you will do me the favour to lay before the Society the following observations. I perceive you went out of your usual course to give the "earliest publicity" to what you deem Dr. Jameson's "very important" paper; and, therefore, I trust you will do me the justice to publish my reply in the next number of your Journal.

Dr. Jameson begins by stating his disinclination to report upon the state of the Society's Museum, lest he might be considered as "attacking the proceedings of his predecessors." A very proper feeling, but

which, having overcome, he should not have allowed to retain such influence over his report, as to induce him to conceal the names of those, his predecessors, he thought fit to censure. For my part, I wish he had been more explicit, both for his own sake and for mine; for hints and insinuations are difficult for me to deal with; while they leave him open to a suspicion of being one of those who are

“Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike;”

“Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike”—

a character, which I should be very sorry did I really think him to merit.

However lest I should be accused of appropriating to myself blame intended for another, conscious of deserving it; I must refer to what was said by Dr. M'Clelland (from whom of all men I least expected an attack) at a late meeting of the Society. Dr. Jameson might easily err from ignorance; Dr. M'Clelland could scarcely do so;—the former possibly never heard much more of me than my name, still less the precise part I took in the management of the Museum; the latter was aware I was one of those predecessors of Dr. Jameson he took precedence to censure*; though, as he did not know the state of the collection of Natural History when I took charge (for I believe he had at that time never seen it) I know not how he can justify his bold comparison.

Dr. Jameson first notices the “*minerals*” and “*rocks*,” and comments in severe terms upon the state in which he found, and left them. With this I have nothing to do. The mineralogical and geological (organic and inorganic) departments were never committed to my care. Mr. James Prinsep kept them in his own hands; and, in justice to him, I beg to say, that although from want of cabinets he could not arrange them; there was, so far as I remember, none of that confusion and damage Dr. Jameson so forcibly bewails. Certainly they were packed in drawers, but they were well known to Mr. Prinsep. I believe most, if not all of consequence, of them, were labelled; and the destruction spoken of is far more likely to have happened in their transmission to the Society, than in their quiet dormitories in the Society's rooms. At all events, as aforesaid, I had nothing to do with the mineralogy, nor geology either.† The zoology was my branch of the

* Sic. in M. S.—EDS.

† I do not know the arrangements made with Mr. Evans; but I believe he had charge only of the zoological part of the Museum, and consequently was as innocent of the mismanagement (if any) of the “*minerals and rocks*” as myself. I think this due to an absent man. Lieut. Kittoe's proceedings I know still less of; but he, as well as the Museum Committee, are here to answer for themselves.

Museum ; for this, *as I left it*,* I am answerable, and to Dr. Jameson's notes upon it I shall briefly reply, in the order of his remarks.

Mammalia.—Dr. Jameson states that "many of the specimens of *Mammalia* are exceedingly good ; but others, from their bad condition, require to be replaced as soon as possible." I believe the good specimens are for the most part those procured and set up either by myself or under my superintendence. The bad ones are what were in the Museum before I took charge, and were in a most miserable state, as may be seen from my first annual Report. I left them in the Museum only till better could be procured, on the principle that a bad specimen is better than none.

Birds.—Of the 600 birds mentioned by Dr. Jameson, about 360 were procured and prepared by my exertions—many of them shot by myself ; of the rest I err but little if I say, the greater part would never have reached the Society's Museum, if I had not taken measures, hereafter to be mentioned, for their collection. Of those prepared in my time I have copious notes, and the greater portion of a catalogue made, which is enriched by observations on the manners and habits of the Indian birds by Mr. C. W. Smith. This I did intend to finish, so soon as I could get a little respite from the incessant occupation incidental to the wandering and anxious life I have led since I left Calcutta, would allow ; and I shall be happy to do so as soon as possible, if the Society wish it. In the enumeration of new and rare specimens Dr. Jameson omits the newest and rarest of them all, viz. the *Halcyon amauropterus, mihi*, which I discovered, and the *Eurimynchus griseus*, of which but one other specimen is known.†

* I say *as I left it*, because the Editors of the Journal in a note appended to Dr. Jameson's Report say, that since his departure, short as the time has been, the minerals he arranged have been "swept into chaos by the unguarded hands of *Assistants*." As nearly two years have elapsed since I was Curator, during which the Museum had been in charge of a Committee and two Curators before Dr. Jameson ; surely some allowance might have been made for Dr. Jameson's "predecessors" on the same score ; especially as from the utter failure of the Committee to fulfil the office properly, the whole management was probably left in their time to the "unguarded hands of *Assistants*" only. I think the excuse might have been made for us ; not I trust that I need it, but in common fairness.

† As every one with any pretensions to ornithological knowledge is acquainted with the rareness of this bird, I fear from Dr. Jameson's silence, it has been lost to, or abstracted from, the Museum. I hope the Secretaries will inquire into this ; for it is unquestionably the most valuable ornithological specimen we have. (1)

(1) Dr. Pearson's note.—We have made the suggested inquiry of Dr. McClelland, who replies thus,

"The Museum is at present in such confusion owing to the repairs of the house, that it is impossible to say what is in it, and besides all the tickets have fallen off the birds from damp, as they appear to have been merely fastened with glue."—EDS.

Osteology.—The osteological department is well spoken of by Dr. Jameson. The skeletons he praises were nearly, if not quite, all procured and articulated under my directions. And those who know by actual practice, the trouble of preparing bones of a skeleton; and afterwards the manual labour, and anatomical and mechanical skill requisite to articulate them, will not be disposed to censure me, or withhold their praise from my industrious and willing assistant M. Bouchez; for the value of who's services I am pleased at having another opportunity of recording my thanks.

Ichthyological, Erpetological, Conchological, &c. Departments.—As Dr. Jameson says nothing about these, I shall follow his example, except to observe, that the want of bottles, and means to arrange the specimens, placed them in nearly the same condition as that of the minerals; that I procured most of them; the land and fresh water shells of India in particular were chiefly from my own collection, and so were the insects, except a few presented by Dr. M'Clelland, and one or two other individuals, and some from Chirra Poonjee and Sylhet, which I purchased.

With regard to Dr. Jameson's suggestions—I have to observe, that fitting up the bird-cases with shelves, is doubtless an alteration, but no improvement upon the plan I adopted. Shelves in high cases, like the Society's, obstruct the view of the specimens and darken the cases; and for these reasons I removed them. By my plan the specimens could be systematically arranged, and were so; and in my opinion it admitted of far more being placed in a given space than the shelving system. As to the classification of the birds, I followed that of Vigors; as given in the Zoological Journals, and Stephens' and Shaw's Zoology as being simple, easy of access to common readers, and highly approved of by eminent zoologists. No doubt it has faults, but it is the system (perhaps I should say *method*) best adapted to a Museum where the majority of members are not professed ornithologists; and to change it for that of Cuvier, the chief merit of which is being part of a general systematic work, is I submit, another instance of an alteration being no improvement.

Dr. Jameson next suggests that the cases should be made "air tight by lining the edges of the doors with shamois leather, poisoned with arsenic." I fully agree with him that specimens of Natural History can be preserved here, and I will go further than he does, and say, they can be preserved here not only almost, but quite as well as they can be in Europe; but not by the means he points out. As for making a case air-tight, the thing is impossible; but it may be made tight enough to become continually damp within—a rather curious mode of preserving the specimens. Years

ago I pointed out to the Society, and practised, with complete success, the plan I suggested of keeping the cases open as much as possible, particularly in fine weather. When specimens are well aired, and the pernicious practice of shutting them up in tight cases is abandoned, they can be kept as well in Bengal as in England. I had some in my private collections which I prepared seven years before, and in so perfect a state as not to have lost a feather;* and I venture to assert that no one while the Museum was under my charge ever saw one of the specimens prepared from fresh birds, either in a decayed or damaged state. In fact, nothing will keep in a damp climate unless frequently aired, whether animal or vegetable specimens, stationery or linen, silks or satins, pack them in tin and air-tight boxes how we may,—a fact which will be borne testimony to by every old lady in Bengal.

Again with regard to Dr. Jameson's "*desiderata*;"—I regret that neither he himself, nor any of his friends, consulted the Journal, or inquired what had been done by those predecessors he assumes to be so worthy of censure. Had he done so, he would have found, that I did "get up under the auspices of the Society" the instructions or "memorial" as he terms it, (which forms the first of his list of "*desiderata*") giving brief instructions how to collect, prepare, and pack objects of Natural History; and that it was extensively circulated both by Mr. Prinsep and myself. This memorandum, moreover, was followed by a very long paper of no less than ten closely printed pages in the number of August 1835, of the Journal of the Asiatic Society; in which were detailed the plans followed by the best taxidermists in Europe, and the result of my own experience of eight years in this country. A further experience of four years has given me but little to add; so I think the Society cannot do better than re-print and circulate that paper. I shall be happy to make a few alterations in, and additions to it, and Dr. Jameson will perhaps favour us with his remarks, or some account of such methods as may have been recently brought into notice in Europe; while Dr. M'Clelland can append a list of specimens required by the Society. When my paper was written every thing was welcome, and consequently no such list appended. These papers were eminently successful; great numbers of specimens having been sent in soon after their having been circulated: probably copies of the shorter one are still in the Secretary's office.

* For this see the *Felis kutas, mihi*, in the Society's Museum, which I mounted in December 1831; and when I left Calcutta in 1837, nearly six years afterwards, its preservation was so perfect, that though a heavy specimen, I lifted it up by the hair of the back without injury. I need scarcely say it had never been shut up in an air-tight case.

I believe I have now replied to the zoological part of Dr. Jameson's observations, and shewn—First, that the censure he bestows does not belong to me; secondly, that those parts of the Museum he praises were especially under my care; and, thirdly, that his suggestions for the improvement of the zoological department of the Museum are either pernicious, or have been anticipated years ago. I shall now proceed to state what I did while I held the office of Curator, so that he, or any body else who feels disposed to the work, may deal out upon me the censure he may consider me to merit; for, as I wish not to usurp credit which does not belong to me, I am not any longer inclined to be under imputations of misconduct and neglect, for the errors and omissions of others.

I think it was so early as the year 1830 that I proposed to Sir E. Ryan, then, as now, the most disinterested lover of science in the Society, the establishment of a Museum of Natural History for the Asiatic Society. I was at that time at Midnapore, and the suggestion, though favoured with his support, was too much in advance of the feelings of the day, almost exclusively confined to the love of Oriental literature. On removing to Calcutta in 1832, I proposed the matter to the Society at large; but nothing could be done till July 1833, when I was appointed, much against my will, honorary Curator of the Museum of Natural History. This I nominally held till March 1835, and it was but nominally, to please Mr. Prinsep, and against my own wishes and judgment; for no assistance was given me. I could but ill afford to keep up additional expenses to convey me to the Museum; and more than all, I felt that my circumstances were then such as not to warrant my so giving up time, which I ought to employ to the benefit of my family; therefore I resigned the situation, and proposed, that a person properly qualified should be sent for from Europe, to fill it. The subject was hereupon referred to the Committee of Papers (as it is reported in the Journal of the Asiatic Society, but as I think, to a Subcommittee) for the purpose of considering the question. This Committee consulted Baron Hugel, and the majority agreed that for various reasons, stated in their report, it would be better to employ a Curator already in the country, whose services could be procured at less cost, and devote part of the sum proposed, for the contingent expenses. To this the Society agreed, and I was elected Curator in April 1835, as an experiment for one year.

When I took charge of the Museum no order nor arrangement had been observed; specimens of the arts and sciences of India, and the neighboring countries, of their religion and manufactures, antique and modern, were mixed with those of Natural History in abundant

confusion. The cases were dirty, and falling to pieces, with wooden doors ; the rooms damp ; and the specimens decaying. All this was reduced to order. In the words of my first annual report—" The first step was to divide the Museum into two distinct parts ; one consisting of the works of art ; the other, of the productions of nature. The numerous valuable specimens of the former being lost in the rooms below, were removed into the entrance hall, staircase, and gallery, where they now are, and where they are seen, as we all know, to the greatest advantage ; and their removal allowed of the apartments they occupied being entirely devoted to the Natural History portion of the Museum.

" On examination, the specimens of Natural History were found, for the most part, in a very neglected state. In Osteology they were numerous, and some of these very valuable ; but many were more or less mutilated, and the teeth of the skulls lost, while no catalogue, nor even memorandum of the greater portion could be found. The first care was to remedy this : the broken specimens were repaired, so far as they could be repaired ; and a catalogue was made which includes every thing concerning them that can be gleaned from the Researches and other quarters, whether as to the specimens themselves, or the names of the donors. In making this catalogue some difficulty was experienced from the want of any notices of the specimens, and from there being no objects of comparison, by which to discover the species of an animal, of which we had perhaps but a horn, or a single bone.

" While this was going on, attention was also directed to the formation of a cabinet of reference to compare the fossil remains in which the Museum is so rich with the living congeners of the animals to which they belonged. This is in its very nature a tedious and laborious work ; but already there have been articulated, and set up, skeletons of a Monkey, Weasel, Cat, Rat, Musk-deer, Horse, Parrot, and Tortoise. The Rhinoceros, which was before but badly put together, has been made the most of that its condition would allow ; and an Elephant's skeleton,* and those of another Horse and Tortoise are being prepared. As this branch of the Museum is of the greatest importance, I am anxious to render it as complete as possible ; and with this view have written to various individuals likely to further our object, who have promised the bones of the Camel, wild Buffalo, large Deer of various kinds, the large Bullock of Upper India, the Tapir, and the Alligator ; and we may expect soon to receive them."

But for full information I beg to refer to the report, which was pub-

* This was afterwards found unfit for articulation, and I procured another.

lished in the Journal of the Asiatic Society for April 1836 ; where it will be seen that in one year the Museum put on a different aspect from what it presented when I took charge. The damp was got rid of ; most of the cases were altered and repaired ; the decayed specimens were restored as far as possible ; an Osteological catalogue was made ; that of the Birds began ; nine complete skeletons were articulated ; twelve specimens of *Mammalia*, and 133 birds were mounted, and more than 500 specimens of *Vertebrata* ; 150 *Molusca*, some *Crustacea*, and several hundred insects were added to the Museum ; and the Committee was so well satisfied with my exertions as to resolve—" That the Committee are highly pleased with the arrangements adopted by Dr. Pearson in the Museum, and with the progress it has made under his supervision ; and they have no hesitation in recommending to the Society a continuation of the same system which has proved so beneficial and effective during the experimental year."*

My copy of the Journal for the first months of 1837 was lost in a boat on the Ganges, and I have but a draft copy of my report for that year. But from this I learn that in the second year, the arrangements of the last year were followed out by improving the appearance of the apartments by matting the rooms ; while by free ventilation the damp, from which so much inconvenience was formerly experienced, altogether disappeared. The remainder of the cabinets, save one, were glazed, and made ready for specimens ; and subscriptions were set on foot for adding to them. There were mounted in the Museum, twenty-eight specimens of *Mammalia*, two hundred and thirty birds—ten of large size ; and sixteen reptiles ; and eight skeletons were prepared and articulated. Besides these there were presented twenty-eight osteological specimens. Most of the reptiles, the fishes, and invertebrated animals are not enumerated in my draft of the report ; but I believe they amounted to several hundred specimens.

Thus in two years there were prepared by myself and under my superintendence,

17 Articulated Skeletons,

363 Mounted Birds,

40 Mounted *Mammalia*,

and a large collection was made, principally by myself and my own servants, of other vertebrated and invertebrated animals. The skeletons of all the large *Mammalia* we have were thus procured. Those of the Orang-Outang, Monkey, Weasel, Cat, Rat, Musk-deer, Cow, Horse, Ass, Hog, Rhinoceros, Parrot, Adjutant, Tortoises, &c., were procured

* Journal of the Asiatic Society, April 1836, page 253.

entirely by my exertions. When the Orang-Outang* died its owner directed the skin to be tanned, and the carcass thrown away. As I had long had my eye upon it, I soon found out what had been done, hastened to the owner, and by recovering the greater part of the bones (all save a few of the feet, I think) had the pleasure of setting up in the Museum one of the most valuable skeletons in the world. The carcass of the Rhinoceros was sent to Dr. Grant by Mr. J. H. Barlow, who shot him; Dr. Grant gave it to me, and I presented it, with his consent, to the Society in Mr. Barlow's name. In fact I procured all these specimens by my own exertions (for there was not one in the Museum when I became Curator) as well as the skeleton of the Elephant, which was about being articulated when I gave up the office.

Besides these things I maintained at my own expense an extensive correspondence with various individuals to induce them to send specimens to the Museum; and represented to the members of the Government, with an urgency which I fear was sometimes thought scarcely becoming, the importance of expeditions undertaken into countries but little known, being accompanied by persons qualified to make zoological collections. For instance, I represented to Sir C. Metcalfe, that the attention of the Assam Tea expedition should be directed as much as possible to this object, and I believe it was in consequence of this recommendation, that any zoological collections were made in that expedition. I did the same when Dr. Richardson's expedition into the Shan country was contemplated; and I have reason to believe he would have been accompanied by an officer expressly for this purpose, had he not set out sooner than was expected. In short, I can safely say, I lost no opportunity of acquiring specimens for the Museum, and of advancing zoological knowledge. All this was not done in a corner; but is well known to the President, to some of the Vice-Presidents, and to the Members of the Committee of Papers of the day. And it was done too at a time when an up-hill battle had to be fought. No Government allowance was then given to the Society; and a great number of the members of most influence were opposed to spending their money on a Museum of Natural History. Indeed so begrudgingly were the necessary expenses bestowed, that I had both years to advance money, every month, for contingent expenses, at my own risk, while I paid the salary of young Nicholas, M. Bouchez's nephew, out of my own pocket, and thus brought him up as another valuable Assistant in

* Though here called an Orang-Outang, for want of a name which an English reader can well understand, I believe the specimen to be the female of the *Simia Satyrus*, the Gigantic Ape shot by Capt. Cornefoot in Sumatra, which was described in the Researches, and whose jaw bone is in the Museum.

the Museum. I beg not to be misunderstood as assuming any merit for these things; it was my duty to do them, and it is to shew I did not neglect my duty, that I venture to mention them.

With regard to catalogues, it was no use to prepare one of the *Invertebrata* till a collection could be made worthy of a catalogue being prepared; nor of the *Vertebrata*, which could not be displayed. But of the former the shells were all fixed upon ebony boards, and labelled with their names and locality—a measure which obviated the necessity for a catalogue, and rendered the making one an easy matter; while of the latter, I both labelled and made a catalogue of the osteological specimens, collecting, at no little pains, all the information that could be procured about them, and the names of the donors, from the Researches and Records of the Society. The *Mammalia* and Birds were all labelled in a similar manner, and a catalogue prepared of a portion of the former, and more than 200 of the latter. These catalogues I shall be happy to send to the Society; the two first immediately, if so required, though I had rather delay doing so till I can copy out and finish the third.

I have now given a fair exposition of my conduct, and furnished any person who may be inclined to comment upon it with ample materials. I hope I have done it in a proper spirit, and avoided any needless asperity of remark: it has been my aim to do so, to defend myself, to offend none; but if I have unfortunately been too harsh, I am sorry for it, and hope some allowance will be made for the feelings of a man who knows that so far from deserving censure for having neglected his duty as Curator of the Museum, he is fully entitled to the thanks the Society accorded him when his services were fresh before them; and that but for his exertions there would not at this moment have been a Museum of Natural History at all.

I have only further to remark, that placed in a public situation as a servant of the Society, I had reason to expect my proceedings would be narrowly watched; and I have no objection to the criticism which by accepting the situation I courted. But I have a right to demand that the criticism should be fair; and that I should not be censured for the blunders or neglect, (if such there were) of others. I pretend to no profound knowledge of Natural History—a science in which, (as I have pursued it as an amusement, and a relaxation from the more serious, and to me more important, study of my profession) I am probably inferior to Dr. Jameson and many others in the country; but I yield not to him, nor to any one else, in the faithful performance of any duty I venture to undertake.

In conclusion, I do not apologise to yourselves, Gentlemen, for trespassing so long upon your pages, for it is in the very nature of a defence to take up more room than an attack; and having published the attack, I am sure you will do me the justice to publish my defence; and the same sense of justice will prevent you from prescribing its limits; while I should be wanting in respect to the Society, if I failed to do my utmost to demonstrate that one, whose services they so long thanked, and paid for, did not unworthily receive their favours.

I have the honor to be, Gentlemen,
Your most obedient humble servant,

Darjeeling, 24th June, 1839.

J. T. PEARSON.

ART. XI.—*Proceedings of the Asiatic Society.*

(Wednesday Evening, the 1st May, 1839.)

At a Meeting of the Asiatic Society held in the Grand Jury Room:—

The Honorable Sir E. RYAN, President, in the chair.

Read the Proceedings of the last Meeting.

DR. MARTIN was proposed by DR. O'SHAUGHNESSY, seconded by the President.

DR. BAIN was proposed by the Officiating Secretary, seconded by the BISHOP of Calcutta.

Professor AGASSIZ was proposed as an Honorary Member by the President, seconded by the BISHOP of Calcutta.

The Nomination was referred to the Committee of Papers.

Read a letter from the Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, acknowledging the receipt of presentation copies of Oriental publications, forwarded by the Society.

Read a letter from Professor LASSEN to the address of Mr. JAMES PRINSEP, proposing that the Society should establish an agency in Bonn for the sale of Sanscrit publications, and bearing warm testimony to the great importance of Mr. J. PRINSEP'S recent discoveries; requesting also information on the subject of specimens of birds which may be procurable here.

Resolved—That the thanks of the Society be presented to Professor LASSEN for his liberal proposal in respect to the agency for the sale of Oriental publications, which appears calculated to be very beneficial to the Society, and that the Officiating Secretary be requested to communicate with him on the subject, stating that the Society has entirely left with him the selection of an agent in Bonn for the sale of Oriental publications.

The Officiating Secretary then read several applications for the situation of Curator, vacated by the departure of Mr. JAMESON, but as the candidates' qualifications had not been considered by the Committee of Papers to reach the standard required by the Society,—

It was proposed by DR. O'SHAUGHNESSY, seconded by Captain FORBES—That DR. M'CLELLAND be requested to accept the office of Curator, on the usual allowances.

DR. M'CLELLAND returned thanks to the Society, and expressed his readiness to forward the views of the Society in any manner that he was able; but